

PROFILES OF HOPE 2015: APL.DE.AP
By Karen Zarsadiaz-Ige, LACDMH Public Information Officer



The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's (LACDMH) Public Information Office (PIO) has taped the last segment of its upcoming Emmy Award-winning series, *Profiles of Hope*. This segment of the long-awaited series will spotlight Apl.de.ap who is best known as the Filipino-American rapper, record producer and singer of the Grammy Award-winning group The Black Eyed Peas.

The *Profiles of Hope* series is made up of 10-minute inspirational stories, featuring individuals who share how they overcame stigma and various obstacles to eventually lead them to a road of *Hope, Wellness and Recovery*. This latest round is part of a large anti-stigma and social inclusion campaign to create awareness, education and discussion about mental health. Our campaign partners include Fraser Communications and Showreel Productions.

Born as Allan Pineda Lindo, but better known as Apl.de.ap, he was born in the Philippines to an African-American father and Filipino mother. His father left the family before he was born, leaving his mother to raise him on her own. As a young boy, he helped his family survive by working on farms, planting sweet potatoes, sugar cane and rice. "Growing up in the Philippines, I came from humble beginnings... We were very poor," said Apl. "My mom was so resourceful, it didn't feel like it." She later took care of him and his six younger siblings as a single mother.

Apl was born with a rare eye condition, known as nystagmus, that causes involuntary movement of his eyes. He is considered legally blind. As a child, he would be bullied and teased for not being able to see the chalkboard in school and for being biracial. "My grandmother was instrumental in my life. She always defended me," Apl explained. "She said, 'one day, you'll be a superstar!' She made me feel special, like I was like everybody else."



His mother signed up him for the Pearl S. Buck Foundation where he was matched with an American sponsor, Joe Ben Hudgens. Hudgens eventually adopted him at the age of 14, bringing him to the United States where he would receive as much treatment for his visual condition as he could. Coming to the United States wasn't as Apl had expected. He felt homesick and so far away from his mother and family. It was an adjustment for him and his adopted dad. "I think my dad had a tough time, too. He never had kids and now he was taking care of a teenager," stated Apl.

Apl's adopted dad's roommate had a nephew about the same age as him. That nephew was named William Adams, otherwise known as will.i.am. The two became instant friends and each other's support system. Music and dancing became their common interests. "In breakdancing and music, I didn't need my vision. I only needed my mind, body, heart and soul," said Apl. The two eventually formed The Black Eyed Peas, recruiting Taboo and Fergie along the way. And, as they say, the rest is history.

But beyond what you see on stage, Apl has battled tough personal times, revealing a period of time that he's never opened up about to anyone that was especially difficult. He also discussed the tragic death of two of his brothers; one brother died by suicide and the other was murdered. Their deaths took a deep toll on him. Being the eldest brother, he felt responsible for his brother who took his life. "I was blaming myself. I'm the oldest brother and I was supposed to be his support system," shared Apl. "I felt like I could've consoled him or given him hope. It took me a while to realize that it was out of my control."

Through the dark and challenging periods of his life, he always found solace in music. “Music helped me out. I was able to express my emotions through music.” Part of what also keeps Apl grounded and connected is his love of community. Through his Apl.de.ap Foundation, he has raised money to build classrooms in the Philippines, created scholarships for children, invested in businesses that employ hundreds of Filipinos in his hometown, and brought medical services and equipment to infants and children in rural parts of the Philippines. Charity is a part of his life that few know about. For him, this is his mission of giving back. “I was able to pursue my dreams. I’m paying it forward.”

You’ll hear more about his story in the upcoming *Profiles of Hope*.

Apl.de.ap not only taped a *Profiles of Hope* segment but also a public service announcement (PSA) for LACDMH. The *Profiles of Hope* segment and the PSA, both featuring him, are the last of three that will debut soon.